

FIGHTING THEM OVER.



ON AN OUTPOST.

The first battle into which a Regiment of Missouri Youngsters was thrown.

EDITOR NATIONAL TRIBUNE: The war of the rebellion began while I was living with my parents on a farm a few miles east of Springfield, Ill. Late in the Spring of 1861 I returned home from a military academy, where I had entered on the senior year, and as the rumors of war took form, with the body of cadets, found a new interest in our military exercises.

Fort Sumter surrendered to the forces arrayed against the Government, and the great struggle was on. Then came the President's call for 75,000 men, and Camp Butler, a rendezvous for Illinois troops, was opened within a mile of our farm. The boys of the neighborhood found the camp a great attraction, and the martial spirit was developed amongst the youngsters.

When the call came for 300,000 men, the population of Camp Butler rapidly increased as the volunteers flocked in. Several young men from our Township served with the three-months troops, and when they returned home found eager listeners among the boys as they related wonderful stories of camp life and adventures in the field. The veterans were the lions of the spelling matches and other rural events, and I remember that the boys did not resent the popularity of the men who had dared the dangers of war.

One fine summer evening a spelling match was held at our distant school-house. The young men for miles around were there, and when the exercises had concluded, gathered to talk over the news of the day. The teacher had brought a late copy of the Springfield Journal, the news columns told of desperate battles in Missouri, and mentioned the proposed organization of a regiment of cavalry from the central part of the State to serve in the West.

"Say, fellows," said Ed Agee, a young fellow of 18, and the leader in our boyish sports, "let's organize a company for the cavalry. We won't have any real fighting like the infantry soldiers, and it's no more than right that we should help to save the country."

The proposition met with instant enthusiastic favor, and I was called upon to lead the movement. A letter was written to the second in the schoolmaster's desk and headed in imitation of a muster-roll. I then explained that no one could enlist who had not reached the age of 18, and called for signatures. Before we separated that night 30 names had been placed on our list, a future meeting arranged, and a committee assigned to offer our services to the State authorities.

The next day we waited on Gov. Yates, in company with a well-known politician, who was a particular friend of my father's, and who was indebted to him for many favors during the past political campaign. The Governor asked us a great many questions, and finally dismissed us with a note to his Adjutant-General, and that official issued the papers giving us authority to enlist a company to be attached to the cavalry.

When the committee reported our muster-roll had increased to 50, and before the meeting closed 80 young men had signed the muster-roll. The next step was the election of officers, and much to my surprise I was elected Captain. Ed Agee was made First Lieutenant, and a young man named Allen, who had been out with the three-months men, was selected for second place. Our parents were not so unanimous in their approval of our action as we could wish, and we lost several of the younger members.

It was a great day when we gathered in front of the commanding officer's quarters at Camp Butler and mustered into the service of the United States to serve for the period of three years unless sooner discharged. The Regular Army officer who had us in charge commented on our youthful appearance, and when he saw the officers did not seem to conceal his ideas about "putting up boys to command men."

At that time cavalrymen were allowed to furnish their own mounts, and our troopers paraded their favorite riding horses. It was soon remarked that ours was the best mounted company in the regiment. We drew uniforms, and the officers appeared in regimentals, but arms were lacking. We went through the drill with sabers whittled from pine boards, and the men soon became proficient in the various movements. I devoted several hours each day to drilling my officers and men to such good purpose that the Colonel took occasion to compliment us as dress-parade, and when the companies were stationed we found ourselves designated as Co. A, giving us the right of the line, the post of honor.

One fine morning we were ordered to fall in to draw arms and equipments. We now felt ourselves soldiers indeed. Marching orders came, and three long trains composed of box-cars and coaches were loaded with horses and men, and we were off to play our part in the grand drama of war. It was late in the evening when we left Camp Butler, and early morning found us crossing the ferry to St. Louis. We were not allowed time for sight-seeing; wagons were loaded with our camp equipment, the bugles sounded "hooray and saddles," and the command moved westward. For three days we hurried forward and early in the evening of the third day we reached the little town of Springfield.

The regiment went into camp, and scouting parties were sent out to prevent any movement of the men or supplies for the Southern armies then operating a few miles south of our position.

One morning I was ordered to report at the Colonel's quarters, and as I approached his tent met a roughly-dressed fellow I had never before seen. He was a man of about 30 years of age, and gave me a sharp glance as we passed. The Colonel rose to meet me as I entered the tent, and saluted:

"Captain," said he, "the man who has just left me is a Mr. Jones, a scout. He informs me that a company of the rebel army is forming about 10 miles west of this place. A number of Union men of that neighborhood have been badly used and threatened with death unless they consent to join the army. You will proceed with your company to that locality, break up any hostile movement, and report to me as often as you deem necessary. You will camp in an old church which Jones says is large enough to shelter your men and strong enough to serve as a shelter in case of attack. You will take every precaution against surprise, and I may as well tell you that I am a little suspicious of the scout, who will act as your guide. You will note all his movements, and if you find that he is playing a double game, arrest him at once and send him to me. Now, go, my boy, and give a good account of yourself."

The Colonel closed his eyes, and I hurried to my quarters, called my orderly-sergeant, and soon all was bustle and excitement in the ranks of Co. A. An hour later we marched, 100 strong, and in the afternoon reached our destination. On the skirts of a dense forest stood the old church, surrounded by a high brush fence, while a long, low shed promised comfortable shelter for our horses.

I had felt a touch of awe for the last day or two, and decided to take up my quarters in a log cabin which stood near the church. The farmer and his wife received me civilly enough and ushered me into a small room over the main apartment, which, with many apologies for the "poor accommodations," was placed at my disposal. The men were quartered for the night, guards posted, and then I retired.

About midnight I was aroused from fitful slumber by the low murmur of conversation in the room under my chamber. I quietly crept from the low bed and through a crevice between the ill-fitting boards was able to discern what was going on below. Near the fire sat the scout and my worthy host. A brown jug of ample proportions was close at hand, from which the two worthies drew frequent and liberal drafts. Listening intently I overheard the plan of a diabolical plot of which I and my men were to be the victims. The next evening Mr. Jones was to place a stupefying drug in the coffee served out to the men, and on some pretext or other leave the camp. During the night my landlord was to lead a band of rangers to the church, kill or capture the men, and make off with the horses, arms, and other property to the rebel army. My first impulse was to shoot down the two wretches without warning, but after a second thought I decided to let matters take their course and turn the tables on the crowd.

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Many of the guerrillas, recovering from the panic caused by our fire, threw down their weapons and fled back to the shelter of the woods; others more bold stood their ground, and bullets began to sing over and around us. The clouds of smoke arising from the discharge of fire-arms hung around us like a dense cloud, only relieved by the flashes from the enemy's rifles.

Again we poured in a heavy, crushing volley, and then the bugler sounded the charge. With a cheer our men sprang to their feet, the line was hastily formed, and we were over the fence and clumped down on the foe, who waited our coming. Less than a score in number, they fought like demons.

Our men did not lose their formation, and literally swept the enemy from their front. Revolver and saber did deadly work, and in less than five minutes resistance was at an end, and our first battle had been fought and won. In the charge we captured 30 prisoners, all more or less severely wounded. The captives were few specimens of their class, and sullen and defiant. They were roughly clad, dirty and unshaven, and their conversation and demeanor stamped them as men of common nature with no idea of the claims of common humanity. A platoon led by Lieut. Agos followed the flying enemy into the forest.

Several were overtaken and cut down, but I feared an ambush and ordered the bugler to sound the recall, an order which the Lieutenant did not obey with the best grace. His blood was up and he and his men were changed from jolly country boys into destroyers filled with a mad lust for blood. We inflicted a terrible loss upon the enemy, but had not escaped unscathed.

Two of our men had fallen, and three were groaning from the pain of wounds which had hardly been noticed during the excitement of the battle. They were raised by their comrades, carried into the old church, tenderly placed on improvised couches and their injuries cared for.

The dead were wrapped in their blankets and rough, tender hands prepared the bodies for burial, which, under the circumstances, could not be long deferred. Humanity demanded a like care for the mangled and suffering wretches who lay where they had been cut down by the men from the fence, and a part was detailed to bring in and care for the wounded. This work was suspended by an incident which portrayed the character of the enemy.

Charley Gray, the First-Sergeant, was in charge of the party, and was attracted by the head of a dead man who had been struck down by a bullet at our first volley. The Sergeant, in answer to his appeal for water, placed his canteen to the lips of his prostrate enemy and then stooped to move the man into a more comfortable position.

With a sudden instant his heavy saber rebel raised himself on his elbow and struck at his prostrate with a long knife which he drew from his belt. The Sergeant could not wholly avoid the blow and the keen blade cut a deep gash in his shoulder and drove the good Samaritan ideas from his mind. In an instant his heavy saber flashed from its scabbard and the cowardly assassin passed from earth. I did not think it safe to expose the men I after this adventure, and called the party in.

Messengers were at once dispatched to Headquarters with the news, and we gathered in the morning to wait for morning. With the first gleams of light we went over the field. It was a sad sight. Fifty men lay dead, mangled by the heavy bullets or gashed by sabers. Forty more were found disabled with wounds. These were taken to the best of our ability, and cared for to the best of our ability. Lying under a heap of the slain I found the dead body of my host. A bullet had passed through his head and death had come like a flash of lightning.

A few hours later the Colonel arrived with the companies of the regiment and the surgeons. Our wounded were cared for, and their hurts declared not dangerous. The wounded guerrillas were cared for, but several died before the day closed. Our dead comrades were taken to Springfield for burial, and their bodies placed in military coffins. The next morning the cavalry department. Mr. Jones was given a fair field, and must have considered himself favored by fortune when the cook and his assistant were called away by the Quartermaster-Sergeant to answer some question about rations for the next morning. Soon after Lieut. Agos made his appearance, and reported that the scout had emptied the contents of a good-sized bottle into the coffee kettles.

The men were quietly instructed to appear to use the coffee, but on no account to allow a drop of the liquid to pass their lips. A few minutes before the supper-call sounded Jones was ordered to S—, and soon after took his departure.

As the scout disappeared around a turn in the road Sergt. Foster, who had been out on a scouting expedition, came in. His report might well have caused the regiment to be sent to the front. He reported that the scout had emptied the contents of a good-sized bottle into the coffee kettles.

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STORIES OF NELSON.

He Was an Eccentric Man, but the Privates Adored Him.

EDITOR NATIONAL TRIBUNE: Here are some stories of one of our boys, Nelson, who I think have never been in print.

In front of Corinth, Miss., Lieut. King, of 1st Ky., got a new hat, but it was too large, and he could get no other. It came down until the ears stopped it. One day Nelson came along and saw it.

"What the — is that? All hat and no head!"

After we had fought the battle of Shiloh some of the Kentucky boys managed to get to his tent and stole Nelson's big brown jug and contents. When he found it out he was furious for awhile, but realizing how foolish it was, said:

"They'll make — good soldiers, when they can steal my whiskey!"

Nelson came up when we were encamped on the farm of the rebel Gen. Pillow and asked one of the guards that had been posted to let him see his gun. The soldier's reply, with an oath, was:

"Which end of the gun do you want, the bayonet or butt?"

"You'll make a good soldier, my man," was Nelson's reply as he rode away with his staff.

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DICKET SHOTS.



Don C. Cameron, Washington, D. C., thinks Comrade Hazlett cut his fuse too long when he wrote Osterhaus's Division were not in it at Black River Bridge. Osterhaus had already been at the front and put in the 16th and 42d Ohio, and the 49th and 11th, the 69th Ind., and other regiments, and came back after a battery and found the 1st Wis. in the road mixed up with Lawler's Brigade.

"Lawler himself," says the writer, "sat on his horse in the road under a tree, 10 paces from the lead gun."

"In three minutes more the right section and went off to the front under Lieut. Hackett, followed by Gen. Osterhaus and Capt. Foster. It was about the time that they disappeared in the grove that the slim lead driver fortified behind Gen. Lawler's ponderosity; I being the kid."

"In three minutes more the shell ceased coming over the road, and in another minute we knew by the explosions that they were concentrating on the center section, and simultaneously the limber was blown up."

"In another five minutes Sergt. Stewart came back for help on the right section, under Orderly-Sergt. Aymer, hurried to the front, leaving the left with Lawler and his men, still in the road."

"Being with the right section I know that we took position alongside the railroad and began slamming shells over the heads of the infantry of Osterhaus's Division, the division before Lawler could have gotten in, unless he went by balloon, and every one of those rebel pieces of artillery were at work and they were well backed up by rebel infantry. The infantry of our division were well up to a bayonet line under their works. Look at the casualties of Osterhaus's Division at that battle and you will see that they were there or thereabouts."

Mill Spring.

Marion F. Finn, 2d Ky. battery, Evansville, Ind., writes: "I wish to speak of the movements of some of the other troops in connection with Mill Spring, outside of Thomas's Brigade. They were the brigade at Somerset under Gen. Schoepf."

"We had orders to roll-call on Jan. 19 at 12 o'clock in the night to join Thomas or take a hand in the